

recognition.³⁴ These interpretations failed to place proper emphasis upon the postures of the characters in the closing scene. Janet Miller claims moral superiority over the Carteret family.³⁵

Critics questioned Chesnutt's perception of reality. William Dean Howells, a friend of Chesnutt, called the book "bitter," but he qualified this assessment, writing that "[t]here is no reason in history why it should not be so, if wrong is to be repaid with hate, and yet it would be better if it was not so bitter."³⁶ Most critics revealed that they did not agree with Chesnutt's interpretation. *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* criticized Chesnutt for basing the Wellington Race Riot upon events uncharacteristic of the South, thereby creating "a false perspective when regarded from the viewpoint of real life." Several reviews criticized Chesnutt for crafting characterizations and stereotypes rather than characters. Expressing a negative opinion in the *Atlanta Journal*, Katherine Glover called the novel "silly rot," criticizing the characterization of every African American as virtuous and every white as villainous. These negative reviews illustrate the point made by Matthew Wilson that white audiences conditioned by the historical romances of Thomas Nelson Page and the popular narrative of the events in Wilmington would reject *The Marrow of Tradition* as the truth turned on its head.³⁷

Nonetheless, the book remained a favorite of the literary elite but did not gain a public following. *The Marrow of Tradition* only sold 3,276 copies; in one instance, a Cleveland bookstore requested that Houghton, Mifflin, and Company accept the return of most of their copies.³⁸ Chesnutt failed to capture the imagination of readers, and Waddell's narrative continued to inform the masses.

Thomas Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots*

In 1902, Thomas Dixon, Jr. presented a variation of Waddell's narrative within his best-selling novel *The Leopard's Spots*. In contrast to Chesnutt's sluggish sales, Dixon's novel sold more than a million copies, reflecting the popularity and power of the southern white perspective. Born and raised in North Carolina, Dixon, a Baptist minister, carried his message to northern congregations in 1887.³⁹ Dixon's politicized sermons addressed topics such as immigration, industrialization, and urbanization. During the Spanish-American War, his sermons focused heavily on the nation's role in international affairs. The issue of race was a recurring theme of the sermons Dixon delivered in 1898.⁴⁰

³⁴ Jae H. Roe, "Keeping an 'Old Wound' Alive: *The Marrow of Tradition* and the Legacy of Wilmington," *African American Review* 33 (1999): 238; Wilson, *Whiteness*, pg. 140.

³⁵ McWilliams, *Fictions of Race*, pg. 165.

³⁶ Howells, "A Psychological Counter-current," reprinted in *Critical Essays on Charles Chesnutt*, pg. 82.

³⁷ Review of *The Marrow of Tradition*, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 9, 1901; Katherine Glover, "News in the World of Books," *Atlanta Journal*, December 14, 1901, pg. 4; "Book Review of *The Marrow of Tradition*," *Independent* 54 (March 1902): 582; Wilson, *Whiteness*, pg. 126-127.

³⁸ Wilson, *Whiteness*, pg. 101; "To Be An Author", pg. 174, n2.

³⁹ The standard biography of Thomas Dixon remains Raymond Allen Cook's *Fire from the Flint: The Amazing Careers of Thomas Dixon* (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 1968). Joel Williamson offers a psychological study of Dixon in *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South since Emancipation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

⁴⁰ While at Johns Hopkins University, Dixon came under the influence of Herbert Baxter Adams, who taught the Teutonic germ theory. The theory stated a set of ideas had been carried out of the forests of Germany and delivered